SrI

Sarva desa dasA kAleshu avyAhata parAkramA

rAmAnujA AryA divyajnA vardhatAm abhivardhatAm

[May the most celebrated commands of bhagavad rAmAnujA grow & flourish across time and space without any interference]

A – Introduction to sAstrAs

A-1. Bhagavad rAmAnujA (1017-1137 CE), an ***avatAram (incarnation) of AdisEshan*** (divine serpent of the Lord), in his last days has commanded his close disciples about five kaimkaryams, of which the first one is to read and propagate SrI bAshyam (Tamil - SrIbAshyattai vAsittu praverpittal).

A-2. Following that divine command, SrI vaishNava AcAryAs have been spreading Sri bAshyam through AcArya-sishyA face-to-face intimate dialogue (kAlakshebham).

A-3. Sudarsana Suri says, "SrIbAshyam is so complex that none other than rAmAnujA alone can instruct the intricacies. But since we are not fortunate to be with him, we seek his infinite compassion and blessings to help us to learn a little of his magnum opus."

A-4. Philosophical concepts can be classified under theists (AstikAs, belieivers in at least one deity) and atheists (nAstikAs, Non-believers)

A-5. Theists under Hindu philosophy accept vedAs as the highest pramANA (authority, rule book) and atheists don't accept vEdAs.

A-6. Hindu philosophy has

- [root word is ***pramA*** – certain or correct knowledge]
- ***pramANA,*** [pramA + kAraNam] source or means knowledge (proof)
- pramANA is 3 types in visishtAdvaitam - ***pratyakshA (***direct perception), ***anumAnam*** (inference), and ***sabdham*** (verbal testimony)

- ***pramEyA,*** object of knowledge.
- ***pramAtA –*** subject or knower – A person in the quest of knowledge
- (Note: yukti and pramANA are used interchangeably. Yukti is the active application of the pramANA)
- vedAs are the highest pramANA and bhagavAn is the premeyam

A-7. brahman is understood only through vedAs; and vedAs are used only to understand brahman. They are mutually related.

A-8. The scriptural trinity of the Hindu religion (sanAtana dharma) is
- ***prastAna traya*** - upanishads, bhagavad gitA and brahma sUtrA
- upanishads are sruti prastA,
- bhagavad gitA is smriti prastA and
- brahmma sutra is the njAya prastA

A-9. Sruti, smriti, ithihAsa, purANA and other sAstrAs are the pramANams (rule books) in that order

A-10. Sruti (vedAs, nigmam, AmnAyam, maRai, vAimozhi) is anAdi (beginningless), anantA (endless), apouruasheya (anonymous), nityA (etenal) and nirdOshA (flawless). ***EshAdu dOsha rahita mahitA purANi*** – kurattAzhvan

A-11. The essence of Sruti is Upanishads. It is veda siras (crown of the vedAs) Smriti is what is written by rishis as the interpretation of vedAs (manu smiriti, hArita smriti etc.)

A-12. IthihAsa are srimad rAmAyaNA and mahAbharatA. Bhagavad gitA is the essence of mahabharatA

A-13. VedAs have been sub classified as
- samhitAs (hymns - mantrAs & blessings) [This what most think of vedAs]
- AraNyakAs (theologies, sacrifices)

- brAhmaNAs (rituals, ceremonies)
- upanishads aka vEdAntA (philosophies and spirituality)

A-14. VedAs (knowledge or wisdom) are complex and convoluted. Hard to find the real meaning for commoners. So explanations were created.

A-15. **Shad dharsanAs** (six systems) were developed to give rules to interpret vedAs correctly – nyAyA, vaiSesika, sAmkhyA, yoga, purva mImAmsA, uttara mimAmsA (or vedAntA).

A-16. They all explore – existence and nature of Brammam and jivA; creation of the world (jagat); liberation (mOkshA) from miseries – as simple as God, man and nature (IsvarA, jeevan and jagat)

A-17. All these are developed by maharishis who are omniscient and possess extraordinary powers

A-18. nyAya darshana is based on **nyAya sUtrA** composed by **Gautama maharishi**. It is based on analytical reasoning and logical argumentation.

A-19. **Vaishesika,** closely associated with nyAyA, was founded by **kanAda maharishi** (kana-ad, atom eater); world is made up of fixed parama anu (atoms)

A-20. **sAnkhya**, may be the oldest philosophy, was founded by **Sage kapilA**. It emphasizes the duality of purusha and prakit but does not accept ishvarA as the jagat kAraNam (creator, sustainer and sissolver of the unverse)

A-21. **yOga sAstrA**, founded by **Patajalai maharishi** concentrates on jivA attaining the union with God through yOgA

A-22. minmAmsA = deep research, critical investigation

A-23. pUrva mimama (prior study) aims to establish the supremacy of vedAs and interpret vedic injunctions and associated rituals.

A-24. **purva mImAmsA** has 16 chapters.

- First **12 composed by Jamini** and deals with **rituals and ArAdhanA** (yAgam, yaJJyam, tiruvAradhanam) called ***karma kAnda sutrA***
- Next **4 chapters** in pUrva mImAmsA composed by **kasakrthsnA** and deals with the **ArAdhya devatA** (like Indra, agni etc.) called ***devatA kandA sutrA***s (not available now)
- Both Jamini and KasakrthsnA are disciples of sage bAdarAyaNA

A-25. uttara mImAmsA (posterior study) [aka ***sAriraka mImamA sUtrAs, brahma mImAmsA sUtrAs, vedAnta sUtrAs]*** has 4 chapters and deals with bramma kanda of vedAs (aka Upanishads).

A-26. uttara mImAmsA continues on the pUrva mImAmsA rituals by questioning about who, the inner dwelling (antaryAmi) Lord for all the ArAdhanams. In essence explores the final God.

A-27. pUrvA deals with ArAdhanA and uttarA deals with to whom that yAgA and yaJJya goes to; ***Both of them put together is a single sAstrA.***

A-28. upanishads are encapsulated with vedantA (end or goal of vedAs). It deals with bhagavAn's ***svarUpa*** (innate nature), ***rUpa*** (form), ***guna*** (attributes) and ***vibhuti*** (lordship).

A-29. Sage ***bAdarAyaNA*** (aka vyAsa bhagavAn, krishNa dvaipAyanA, son of parAsara maharishi, father of suka brammam) wrote brahma sutra as the interpretation of these Upanishads which say vedA pratipAdya deva is Lord narAyaNA. (some think bAarAyaNA and vyAsa bhagavAn are different)

A-30. ***brahma sutra is cryptic, abstract vedAnta aphorisms***. It uses minimum syllables to convey a particular idea; many times verb, subject or particular tense is lacking and looks abrupt in many places

A-31. brahma sUtrAs are so terse, it can be interpreted in multiple and contentious ways. Mostly incomprehensible. So the commentaries written by many authors are indispensable.

A-32. *purANa nyAya mImAmsa dharama sAstrAnga miSritha*
vedah sthAnAni vidyAnAm dharmasya ca caturdaSa
says yAjnavalkya smriti

angAni vedAscatvaro mImAmsa nyAya vistarah
purANam dharmasAstram ca vidyA hyetAs caturdaSa
says manu smirti

Sources of knowledge (***vidya sthAnams***) are ***14 i***n our philosophy

- **4 vedAs**(rig, yajur, sama and atharvaNa), 8
- **6 angas** (shiksha, vyAkaraNa, chandas, niruktha, kalpa, jyothisham),
- **purANAs** (Srimad rAmayaNA, mahAbharatam, satvika puraNAs),
- **nyAya sAstrA**
- **mimAmsa sAstrA**
- **dharma sAstra** (smriti and agama sAstrAs)

A-33. ithihasa purnana, smrithi and all other sAstrAs have been established to explain and interpret vedAs

A-34. visishtAdvaita siddhantam unambiguously declares that Lord Sriman narAyaNA is the

- brahman, foremost God
- jagat kAraNakan (cause for the universe).
- first preceptor (Adi guru) and taught vedAs to four-faced (caturmuka) brahmA

A-35. Visvaksenar taught nammAzhvAr (prapanna jana kUdastar).

nammAzhvAr established the supremacy of Lord SrIman nArAyaNA and prapatti sAstram in his 4 prabhandhams

A-36. nAtha, yAmunai and ramAnuja muni later explained visishtAdvaita siddhantam

A-37. Though many AcAryAs have spread the siddhantham, rAmAnuja's efforts were unparalleled and without him the whole SrIvaishNavam would have been vanished and so it is called rAmanuja siddhantam, emperumAnAr darsanam.

A-38. *nAthObhagyam pravruttam bahubhi: upacitam yamuneya prapandhai: dratam samyak yatIndrai: itam akiladhama: karsanam darsanam na:*

- svAmi DesikA claims the AcAryAs like nAtha muni, yAmuna muni and rAmanuja muni have protected and flourished this darsanam for us
- Bahubhi: upacitam = in various ways increased
- drAtam samyak = steadfastly accurately, repairing
- akila dhama = taming, subduing, melting of everyone
- karsanam darsanam na = injuring our religion

A-39. svAmi DesikA extensively wrote in many languages and many philosophical concepts were put into synch with siddhantham and so it is called Desika darsanam

A-40. visishtAdvaita siddhantam claims –

- Having the cetana acetanA as inseparable body (visihta) the bramman is only one (advaitam)
- Jagat (universe) is real but destroyable
- mOksham is a place and not in the mindset

Bhagavad Ramanujar and introduction to SrIbAshyam

A-41. Brahma sUtra emphasizes body-soul relation (kshEtra-kshEtrjjna bhEtam). Body is different from knower. (sariira athma bhAvam)

A-42. Brahma sUtrA is celebrated even by Lord KrishNA in bhagavad gItA (13-4)
rishibhir bahudhA geetam chandhobhir vivdhai: pruTak
brahmasUtra padahS chaiva hEthu madhbhir viniScitai:

A-43. The truth regarding the body and soul relation has been sung by seers (rishis) in many ways, in various forms. Also with proper means and reasoning it has been undoubtedly ascertained in brahma sUtrA words.

A-44. Bhagavad rAmAnujar is aka elaiyAzhvAr, uDoaiyavar, emperumAnAr, yatirAjar, laksmaNa muni, kovil ANNan

A-45. He has composed 8 granthAs –

- vEdAnta sAram, vedAnta deepam, SribAshyam – explanation of bramma sutrA
- Gita bAshyam – Explanation of Bhagavad GitA
- vedArtta sangrahm – Explaining vEda vAkkyams (sentences)
- gadya trayam (saraNAgaty, Sriranga, vaikunta)
- nithyam

A-46. Commentaries for brahma sUtrA were written

- By bOdhAyana rishi called vritti, based on visishtadvaitam principles
- By tangar, dramidar and guha deva briefly.
- Closer to Ramanuja's period by Sankara, Bhaskara, Yadava (not from visishtAdvaitam angle).

A-47. Previous commentaries were not of the right size or from right perspective and so bhagavad rAmanuja embarked on writing a bAshyam.

A-48. rAmAnujA wanted to follow up on bodhAyana vritti and in search of that document, he went to saradA peetam at Kashmir.

A-49. Later after completion of his commentaries, when he went again to Kashmir during dig vijayam, at that time, SaradA devi questioned him to explain the chAndogya upanishad statement, "*tasya yatA kapyAsam pundrikam eva akhiN tasyoditi nAmai*"

A-50. Previous explanations were wrongly breaking the word (kapi: = of the monkey; Asa: bottom; so kapyAsam = bottom of a monkey) and interpreted unpleasantly as, the two eyes of the golden purushA are like two red lotuses which are like the bottom of a monkey.

A-51. Ramanuja broke the words correctly (kapina: = by the sun; Asa: = blossom and kapyAsam = blossomed by the rays of the Sun) and told the right meaning. Lod Sriman nArAyaNA's eyes are like that of the Sun.

A-52. Kapina: = Sun. That is derived from Kam (water) pipati (drinks) = kapa: (one who drinks water). Thus Sun is the one who drinks (evaporation and absorption) water

A-53. SaradA devi was very pleased and paid due respects by putting the rAmAnujA's work on brahma sUtrAs on her head, and titled it as "SrI bAshyam" and said that he will be called as bAshyakArar. (Variation of this story also exists).

A-54. rAmAnujA begins SrI bAshyam, his commentary on brahma sUtrAs with two invocational verses (mangaLa slOkAs)

A-55. While starting any task, it is customary to pray to the Lord for a smooth and successful completion without any obstruction (vignam) – Kind of namaskAram, requesting AsirvAdam, blessings.

A-56. It is also common to announce the larger scope or synopsis (vastu nirdesa) of the endeavor and give the audience a sample.

A-57. *akila bhuvana janma sthEma bhangAdi leele*
vinata vivita bhoota vrAta rakshaika dhEkshE
Sruti Sirase vidiipte brammaNi SrinivAse
bhavatu mama parasmin sEmushi bhakthi upA (mangaLa slOkA 1)

akila bhuvana janma sthEma bhangAdi leele
For whom the creation, sustenance and dissolution is a mere sport
vinata vivita bhoota vrAta rakshaika dhEkshE
one who has vowed to protect all living things who takes refuge unto Hin
Sruti Sirase vidiipte brammaNi SrinivAse
That Supreme Lord SrinivAsa, who is shining beautifully on the crown of the vedAs (upanishads)
bhavatu mama parasmin sEmushi bhakthi upA
May my intellect/wisdom be immersed in devotion (bhakthi)

A-58. The essence of the first mangaLa slOkA is

- emperumAn creates, protects and finally dissolves all the worlds for His own mere pastime (leela rasam)
- out of his infinite compassion, He has made an oath to protect those who have surrendered to Him
- And release those souls from the birth/death cycle (samsAram) and confer mOksham
- He shines so radiantly like a lamp (deepam) in all the vedAnta sAstrAs
- He is supreme in his innate nature (svarUpA) and noble characters (gunA)
- He is the one called SrinivAsa, on whose chest Srl mahAlakshmi (peria piirAttiyAr) stays eternally.
- Onto Him, let me be blessed to have a firm and fixed devotional knowledge (bhakthi rupena jnanam)

A-59. The slokA starts with - akila bhuvana (not nikila or sakala)

- Starting with A (akAram), the first letter in Sanskrit is auspicious
- "A" means *akArAttO vishnu:* - it denotes Sriman narAyaNA
- praNavam starts with akAram (akAra, ukAra, makAra iti)
- KrishNA claims, "*akshrANAm akArOsmi*" in bhagavad gItA
- AzhvAr's *amalanAdipiirAn* starts with "A"
- Poigaiz AzhvAr starts with "*vaiyam dhagaliyA"* with the word world. Similarly here also "bhuvana" with the adjective akila in front.

A-60. The four adhyAyAs of brahma sUtrA are condensed into 4 lines of this slOkA.

- *akila bhuvana janma sthEma bhangAdi leele –*
  - Brahmam is the jagat kAranam (cause of the universe),
  - Essence of 1st adhyAyA of brahma sUtrA
- *vinata vivita bhoota vrAta rakshaika dhEkshE*
  - This is the essence of the 3rd and 4th adhyAyA
  - means and rewards (sAdhanA and phalan)
  - Taking refuge unto Him, He will deliver mOksham. That is His vow
- *Sruti Sirase vidiipte brammaNi SrinivAse*
  - Sriyapati Sriman nArAyaNan is the sole para brahmam cherished in all the Upanishad, the essence of vedAs
  - That automatically eliminates others.
  - This is the 2nd adhyAya of brahma sUtrA (avirOdhA)
- *bhavatu mama parasmin sEmushi bhakthi upA*
  - The route to attain that brahman is through bhakthi
  - The sAdhaNA is further clarified here as upAsanA

A-61. A little more analysis of the first slOkA

- leelA = brahmAn is paripoorNan and His play is for His own pleasure
- brahmaNi is a general name and SrInivAsE is a particular name
- parasmin = the objective here is bhagavAn only and not cheap things

A-62. Further analysis of the first slokA

bhaktE: pUjAdi mAtratvam dhiyA: chintAdi rUpatAm
vyavachHettum ihanyastam SEmushyAdi padadvayam

- svAmi Desika (tAttva tIkA - 72) explains the phrase sEmushi bhakthirupA
- It is not just praying alone, but constant contemplation of bhagavAn's divya rupam mentally, while shaking off all others
- That is called the intelligence embodied through devotion (bhakthi rupena jnanam)

A-63. Question may arise, when bhagavad rAmAnuja has done svatantara prapatti, why is he praying for bhakthi rupena jnAnam?

The answer can be twofold

1. Prayer is for the completion of this treatise without any glitch. For that he is requesting bhakthi that through which he wants to please the Lord.
2. Parabhakthi – Request to realize Lord's nature, form and attributes (bhagavad svarUpa, rUpa, gunanAs) and constant contemplation on those (dhyAna, manana, sraddhA).
3. Similar to pogai AzhvAr prays, "varuttam puRaviruL mARRa" in mudal tiruvandAdi

A-64. A note on different stages of bhakthi

- parabhakti - this state is called jnAnAvastai. Feel happy when bhagavAn is closer and sad when He is away (samslEsha vislEshangalil suka dukkam)
- parajnAnam – this state is called dharsanAvastai. Realizing/visualizing bhagavat svarUpa, rUpa guna vibhUthis.
- paramabhakthi – this state is called prApthi avastai. It is the restless and out of life state similar to a fish taken out of water (sItA pirAtti and LakshmaNA's state at separation from Lord rAmA)

A-65. It is also customary to do guru vandanam (reverence to teachers) at the start of any task. The second invocation slOkA does that.

pAracarya vacas sudAm dhukthApti madhyodrudAm
SamsArAgni vidipate vyabhagata prANArta sanjeevinim
poorvAcArya surakshitam bahumadi vyAkAta dhurastiAm
Ani tamthu nijAkshrai sumanasa bau ma bhivan dvan vaham

A-66. *pAracarya vacas sudAm dhukthApti madhyodrudAm*

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Ani tamthu nijAkshrai sumanasa bau ma bhivan dvan vaham

A-67. The general meaning of this slokA

- Pure minded devotees, please drink this nectar
- It is like sanjivini which saves the lives of those who have fallen into the trap of wildfire called birth/death cycle (samsAram)
- It is the one that had been nurtured carefully and preserved by many good by AcAryAs
- The one without any hindrance
- Came out of the mouth of vyAsa bhagavan, son of parasara maharishi
- The one which came out from the middle of milky ocean called upanishads
- The one in the form of sutrAs

A-68. bhagavad rAmAnuja begins SrI bAshyam as,

bhagavad bOdhAyana krutAm
vistheerNam bramma sutra virttim
poorvAcAryA: sanjkshibhu:

tan madAnuSAreNa sUtrAksharANi vyAkya syandhe

A-69. bhagavad bODhAyanA had written
Voluminous commentaries for brahma sUtra called vritti.
In an abbreviated form, of the poorvAcAryAs,
Accordance, conforming to them
Commentaries will be written for these sUtrAs, letter by letter
(poorvAcaryA means writings of recent Sankara etc. is excluded)

A-70. Let us analyze a little more here

bhagavad bOdhAyana krutAm

- Bhagavad - Highest adjective is given to show that BodhayanA is the best guru here and his work can be completely relied upon

vistheerNam bramma sutra virttim

- bOdhAyaNA wrote voluminous
- No time in one's life span to study all

poorvAcAryA: sanjkshibhu:

- Dramidar etc. condensed it too small and left out the negation of other rival philosophies
- So there is a need for middle ground

tan madAnuSAreNa sUtrAksharANi vyAkya syandhe

- Following their ideas/views, not putting through any of my own
- Carefully analyzing root words, contexts etc. real meanings of the sUtrAs will be explored
- rather than putting our views into the sUtrAs

A-71. Now we are entering into Brahma sUtra vyAkyanam

A-72. Structure of brahma sUtrA

- 4 adhyAyAs,
- 4 pAdams in each (16 pAdams in total),
- 156 adhikaraNams and
- 545 sutrAs

A-73. The general theme on these 4 adhyAyas

- **SamanvayAdhyAyA** (harmony chapter)
  i. 138 sAstrAs, 35 adhikaraNAs
  ii. Integration and Synchronization of all the passages of major Upanishads is achieved as proclaiming **brahman is the cause of the cosmos** (jagat kAraNakan (cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution) [brammam jagat karaNamE]
  iii. It is the upadAna kAraNam and nimitta kAraNam (both material and operative cause.
  iv. All the vedAnta texts talk about brahman, Lord Sriman nArAyaA only

- **avirOdhAdhyayA** (non-conflict chapter)
  i. 149 sUtrAs, 33 adhikaraNAs
  ii. Discusses any objection and refutes and establishes what is said in chapter 1 holds good
  iii. **TBrahman alone is the cause of the cosmos**
  iv. brammamE jagat kAranam

- **sAdahanAdhyAyA** (the means chapter)
  i. 182 sUtrAs, 55 adhikaraNas
  ii. discusses the means by which that brahman can be reached
  iii. route for liberation

- **phalAhyaya** (the rewards chapter)

i. 76 sUtrAs, 33 adhikaraNAs
ii. rewards or goals achieved

A-74. First 2 adhyAyAs discuss what already exists (Siddham) Next two discusses what needs to be executed (sAdhyam) [similar to siddhOpAyam and sAdhyOpAyam in dvaya mantra]

A-75. The general classification would be on 8 stages
sAstra, kAnDA, dwikA, adhyAya, pAda, pEtikA, adhikAraNA, sUtrA
Let us take an example – Here sAstra = *mimAmsa*, kAnDA = ***bramma kAnDA***, dwikA (2 chapter combination), adhyAyA – ***1st adhyAyA***, pAdA – ***1st pAdA***, petikA – ***firt 4 sutrAs combined 1st pEtikA***; adhikaraNA – **1st aDhikaraNA jignAsA adhikaraNam**; sutra – 1st sutra = adAdo bramma jnignAsa – that is the sUtram

A-76. But in general we need adhyAya, pAdA ad sUtrA is good for our referenc.
Example: 1-2-3 means 1st adhyAyA, 2nd pAdam and 3rd sUtrA

A-77. Each aDikaraNam will have one or more sUtrAs

A-78. For each sUtrA/adhikaraNam, commentary deals with five components –
- Subject (vishayam),
- Doubt (Samsayam)
- Opponent View (Poorva paksham)
- Established truth with ptoof (SidhAntham)
- Benefit (PrayOjanam)